

No one expects – exploding sewers! Well, you can't plan for everything.

Now that you've developed a disaster plan and are prepared, what's left to do? Rehearsals, for one thing. Remember that first responders are just that - they don't hang around to clean up the mess. Experience might be the best teacher, but virtual experience is a lot cheaper and easier.

So how do you rehearse a disaster? Start with your staff in jeans and tshirts, and a wading pool full of expendable stuff.

Add a bag of mulch in for the yuk factor. If you really want to be authentic, do it after dark in a tent with a bad charcoal grill going. If you can't do that, you can do a tabletop exercise, talking through the response and recovery process. The best ones are complete with someone bringing in bulletins and updates, because nothing will be simple. You may find water damage days after it actually happened. But if you plan for 100 things and 101 happen, that's only one new thing to deal with.

There are a number of scenarios you can use, several are on our website. The Library of Congress has several, and if you think LC only has books, you've never been there! Or use someone else's disaster as a basis – this is from a blog. It's a perfect storm – it happens when no one is there, the boss is on vacation, the place that offered you space says "Today?". Don't count on the cavalry already being there, though!

Be sure to do drills with fire extinguishers. Talk to your local fire dept or fire marshal, and get training. The first acronym is PASS – pull the pin out, or it won't work. Aim at the base - The natural instinct is to aim at the flames, but you really want to aim at what's burning. Squeeze the handle. Sweep it back and forth. Check what type of extinguishers you have - you never want to use a water extinguisher on an electrical fire, but you can use some multi-type ones on any fire, so check first. Don't leave when the fire looks like it's out, they can re-ignite hours later. And make sure to recharge or replace them after you use them.

How do you budget for something that may never happen, if you're very very lucky? This is a map of disasters in Kentucky – for just last month. If you could cut your costs by 80%, would that make it doable? Then team up with four other repositories and pool your supplies. Voila! A California co-op stores theirs in a shipping container - a pod- in the parking lot of a police station - because it's safe and there's always someone there. Why didn't I think of that? duh! Why were we keeping flood recovery supplies in the basement?

Where do you find trained people in your area? In the other repositories. Don't be afraid to talk to libraries and archives - they're in the same boat. Libraries are leading the way in getting out of their box, or silo. We're all in the same field - preserving cultural heritage. Why can't we play nice? Oh, okay, some are privately funded, some are governmental, some are businesses, some have paper and some have objects, but all have the same objective. It may take some negotiation, but it's possible, and it works.

There are other volunteers who are already trained. How about American Radio Relay League? Yes, there still are ham radio operators, and you will love them when a storm takes out the phone lines and the cell towers. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) can do emergency training for you and help after one happens - and they have conservators. You can also train volunteers. From where? Is there a community so small it doesn't have an American Legion post, or a boy scout troop?

How do you get other organizations to buy into collaboration? Believe it or not, FEMA has a plan, and it's a good one. It's online, or you can order free paper copies, and it's at our website. They have an excellent workbook for identifying heritage sites and objects, and getting your local government and the feds to protect them. It will take you, step by step, through the whole process. You can take the finished survey to your local and state government and say "Look! X percent of the tourism dollars come from

people who come here to see us. If we go down, so do the restaurants, B&Bs, and tax dollars." That will get their attention. It will also get the attention of businesses who may chip in for planning, too. Heritage is not only everybody's business, it affects everybody's business.

How can you fund preservation planning? NEH Preservation Assistance Grants are one way. They provide up to \$5,000 for training, consultants, and supplies. With no matching requirement! Or through the Conservation Assessment Program grants. You can talk to your friends groups. You can get interns from any number of programs to do the research for grants. It's much easier since the Library of Congress put a master list of grants online.

How often – and how – do you back up your digital assets? For many of us, that includes our accession register, and without that, no one will believe you had 3 VanGoghs and a DaVinci mural in the basement. I've heard horror stories about all kinds of backups – CDs that don't last a week, external hard drives that failed three years ago, backup tapes baking in car trunks or eaten by dogs. By all means, back up to your thumb drive, but don't make that the only backup you have. In business, the rule is back up at least 25 miles away and in at least two places. Backing up to your laptop is no help if it's in your office and you aren't! Think LOCKSS – lots of copies keep stuff safe – and the farther away the better. Be sure to mirror your software and installation files, too.

Google for business and disaster recovery and you'll get 2 million hits. We're not the only ones thinking about this.

Talk to everyone about disaster planning. Non-profits have plans to help people, for-profits plan for recovery and continuity. Talk to IT people and construction managers and bank managers. Get out of the heritage silo and you'll find lots of experience and expertise!

If you only read one thing, make it Camilla Alire's book on the flash flood in Colorado, which is about what happened, not what they should have done. It's called Library Disaster Planning and Recovery Handbook, but insurance and dealing with administrators doesn't just happen to libraries. Experience is a good teacher, but only if you listen.